Transgender bathroom bill controversy spreads

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The city of Charlotte passed an ordinance that banned discrimination against the LGBTQ community that led to accommodations for bathroom use, but state legislators thought otherwise.

The legislators of the North Carolina state house overruled the ordinance in Charlotte to combat the ordinance. Governor Pat McCrory signed a bill called the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act or HB2 that overturned the ban. The new law prevents city governments from passing other non-discrimination ordinances.

"This bill claims it will keep men from using women's restrooms. However, transgender women are not men," Corey Riley, a resident assistant, said.

The law forces people to use the bathroom that corresponds with the gender on their birth certificate in schools and public buildings.

Charlotte's ordinance was meant to prevent businesses from discriminating against customers based on gender, religion, age, race or sexual orientation. Instead, North Carolina's legislators turned things around and overruled the ordinance. The controversial problem is that, a transgender will be allowed to use public restrooms based on their gender identity at given at birth.

"Supporters of HB2 and other similar bills often spout that trans people are predators who want to assault women and children. There have been only two documented cases of men entering women's restrooms to assault women and children, and neither of those men were transgender," Riley said.

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The controversy is common in many other Southern states.

Mississippi and Georgia have passed similar laws that will also discriminate against people who are transgender, gay, lesbian or bisexual. In Mississippi, religiously affiliated groups, businesses or individuals will be allowed to have moral convictions against anyone outside of a heterosexual marriage.

In South Carolina, Senator Lee Bright introduced the HB2 or 'bathroom' bill to the Senate. Bright would have public restrooms deemed by biological sex.

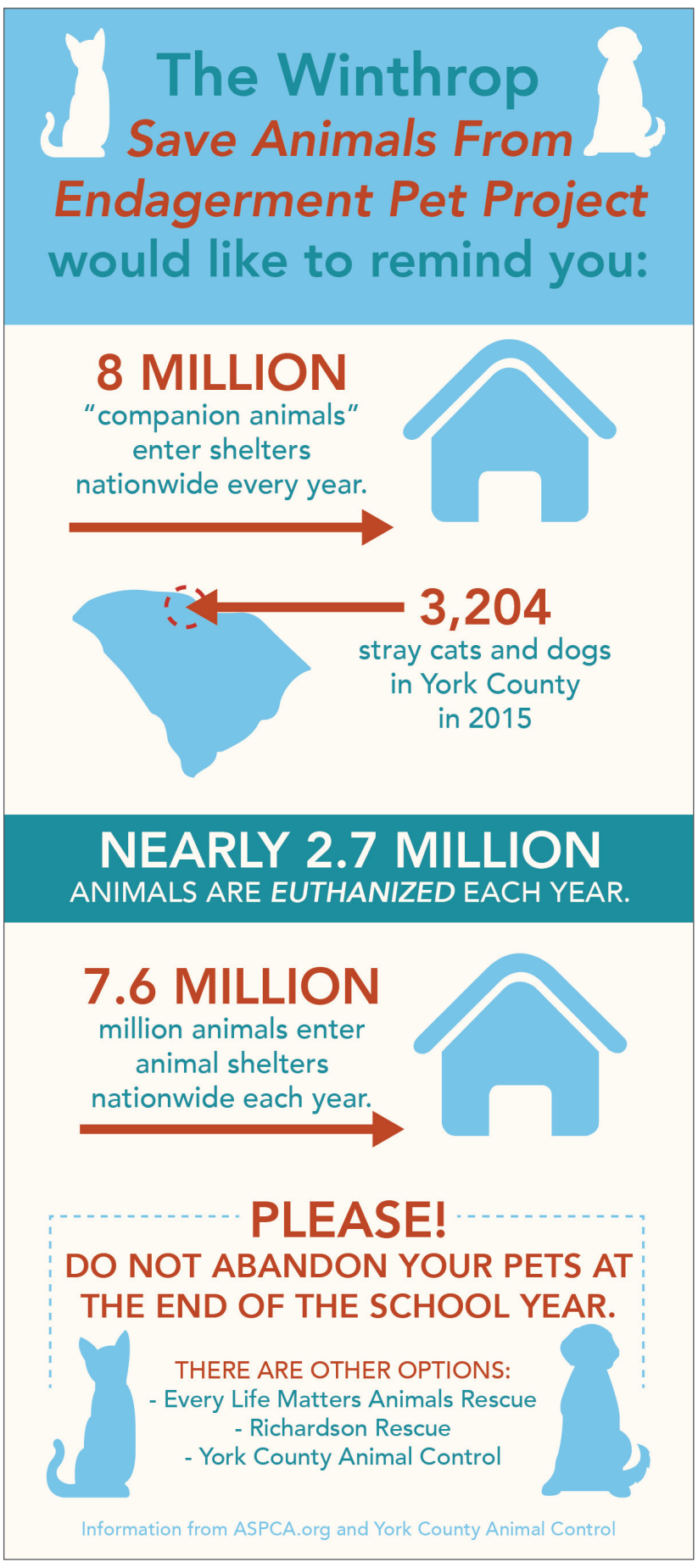
Meanwhile, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley addressed the issue, and said that a transgender bill is unnecessary, which means that the state legislator would not take part in any discriminatory action against the LGBT community.

"This is not a battle that we've seen is needed in South Carolina," Haley said last Thursday.

According to the Winthrop student handbook, there are same-sex bathrooms in all of the resident halls, regardless of the visitation option. The restrooms on campus have been accommodated to fit the needs of the students.

Margaret Nance resident hall has put up signs by their bathrooms that have notified guests that all the public restrooms on the first floor are now same-sex allowing any gender to use them.

"A transgender female is a woman. A transgender male is a man," said sophomore student Jay Grice. "Anyone in between has the right to take it upon themselves to decide what end of the spectrum they are most comfortable with when it comes time to use the restroom."



Futures 'Up In Smoke'

Winthrop police teach students the dangers of drugs and alcohol

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A student went out one night to party with her friends. Being 21, she purchased the alcohol for her friends, agreed to be the designated driver and drove them to the party.

Winthrop police responded to a call in which they found the student lying face down in the backseat of her car, covered in her own vomit. Her friends were found later at another party while she almost died of alcohol poisoning.

Winthrop's Lee Wicker hall RA's hosted the Up in Smoke event put on by the Winthrop University Campus Police. The program showed students an inside look at substance abuse, both of drugs and alcohol.

"Every group of friends has at least a friend or person who has some sort of substance abuse," said Alisha Sweatt, sophomore RA in Lee Wicker.

"You may recognize me," said Officer Kiera Fayall "As I may have sat in classes amongst you."

Fayall has been with Winthrop University Campus Police for almost three years, specializing in narcotics. She acts as the hall officer for Lee Wicker Hall and also works with the Rock Hill Police Narcotics Task Force.

An estimated 89,000 of the individuals with an alcohol addiction or alcohol abuse problem in South Carolina over a one year period were between the ages of 18-25 years old, according to the Alcoholics Anonymous of The Carolinas. According to Fayall, drugs like marijuana and methamphetamine, while still a problem, aren't as big of an issue as newer drugs like synthetic marijuana, which can cause even more damage because it can be laced with other drugs.

"I'm not going to sit here and tell you I don't care, because I do care," Fayall said. "I care about you."

Officer Fayall finished her presentation on substance abuse with a few stories from her own experience growing up. Not only did she experience the effects of drugs and alcohol growing up, she admits that she had a problem with alcohol growing up. She told how she overcame that. When asked about how common this problem is at Winthrop and around Rock Hill, Fayall said that it is"too common."

"I was even taught, groomed to believe that that's college. That is what you do in college," Fayall said. "What I've been seeing is administration is becoming too accepting of it. You're damaging beautiful growing minds, and they expect for you to help them. So just accepting anything and everything is not okay. It's coming to the point that because it's so common that we don't give it the weight it should carry. It's not supposed to be common."

After telling her story, Fayall wrapped up the event by letting students ask her any question they had about drugs and alcohol.

"Through my substance abuse class, I've learned a lot about this kind of stuff," said Jamie Lopez-White, Junior Human Nutrition Major. "But hearing it from someone else, like not a teach but an officer of the law who is out there in the real world who deals with this probably a lot more and having officer Fayall who was very easy to listen was interesting."

"I think it's important, because there are so many students that are falling through the cracks because of drugs and alcohol," Sweatt said.

"Even if substance abuse does not affect us directly like in our own personal lives, it's probably going to happen to someone at some point," Lopez-White said. "So just being aware of it and being cognizant of it helps out a lot."

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